

Child Safeguarding Statement

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission's Child Safeguarding Statement sets out the service we provide and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of our service is safe from harm. We have included an assessment of risk of harm to a child while availing of our service and specified the procedures in place to manage any identified risks. The Child Safeguarding Statement applies to all of our office locations (Dublin, Cork, Longford).

Name of service

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission or GSOC.

Nature of service provided

GSOC is charged with taking and investigating complaints about Garda misconduct.

- Children may make complaints themselves, or an authorised person such as parent or guardian may make a complaint on their behalf. The Child Care Act 1991 defines a child as “a person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married”.
- Children may attend GSOC offices by appointment to verbally give their complaint to a member of GSOC staff.
- GSOC staff may take statements from child victims or witnesses or interview them. In some cases GSOC may arrange for Garda Specialist Interviewers to take the statement on our behalf.
- If a child complains that they have been assaulted by a Garda member, GSOC will photograph the injuries.
- From time to time GSOC will facilitate Transition Year students.

Principles to safeguard children from harm

Below are GSOC's principles and procedures which should be observed to ensure, as far as possible, that a child is safe from harm while availing of our service.

- All GSOC staff are Garda vetted.
- All GSOC staff will have undertaken Tusla online Child Protection Training as a minimum standard.
- Child protection or welfare concerns will be reported to Tusla in a timely manner.
- Any child having direct contact with GSOC (e.g. meeting with, or having a statement taken) will, where operationally possible, be met by two members of GSOC staff one of whom should be the same gender as the child. If this is not possible, the reasons why and decision as to how to proceed will be documented.
- If an unaccompanied child comes to GSOC Offices to make a complaint, the child will be asked for the necessary information to decide whether GSOC can investigate their complaint, but will not be interviewed.

- GSOC will arrange for an appropriate adult to accompany any child that is giving a statement or being interviewed.
- GSOC will adhere to the standards of rights, supports and protection that children who are the victims of crime can expect. Insofar as possible, GSOC will extend these rights, supports and protections to children whose complaints are disciplinary in nature.
- GSOC will take the best interests of the child into account in decisions concerning them.
- Children will be listened to and their views taken into account in decisions concerning them, according to their age and understanding.
- GSOC will manage children's expectations of the outcome of their complaint by communicating in a way that is suitable to their needs.
- Children who may be working with GSOC on Transition Year placements/projects will be accompanied at all times.

Risk assessment

GSOC has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1	Non-compliance with GSOC's Child Child Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines	In time and up to date training on policy and guidelines delivered
2	Risk to school children including Transition Year Students availing of work experience in GSOC	Child Safeguarding Policy will be followed
3	Delay in making referrals to Tusla	Cases where referrals may be required are identified on a daily basis from internal report and internal alerts. Urgent referrals are made on a case by case basis.
4	Receipt of complaints of alleged child abuse where a member of An Garda Síochána is the alleged perpetrator	Admissibility of complaints determined immediately followed by a referral to Tusla. GSOC and Tusla Joint Protocol is currently being drafted.

Procedures

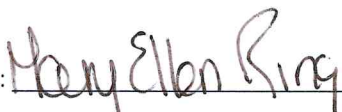
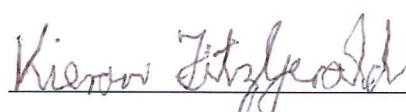
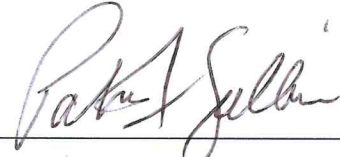
GSOC's Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the *Children First Act 2015*, the *Children First: National Guidance*, and *Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation

GSOC recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on 03 September 2020, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:   

Ms Justice Mary Ellen Ring, Chairperson Mr Kieran FitzGerald, Commissioner Mr Patrick Sullivan

Provider's name and contact details: Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, 150 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1, D01 FT73. Tel: (01) 8716727, Lo Call 1890 600 800

For queries, please contact: Darren Wright, Director of Operations, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commissioner. Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.